

Congress of the United States

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Senator Kennedy and Representative Markey Introduce Legislation to Provide September 11th Families with Stable and Affordable Health Care

Washington, DC – Senator Edward M. Kennedy (D-MA) and Congressman Edward Markey (D-MA) today proposed legislation to enable the families of victims of September 11th to extend indefinitely the temporary health insurance available to them under current federal law.

Current federal law provides temporary coverage for up to 36 months to a wide range of individuals and family members who lose their current group insurance because of the death of a spouse or because they lose their job or change their job. Those who benefit from the continuation of coverage must pay the full cost of the coverage, since the employer no longer defrays part of the cost. But the cost is still substantially less than the cost of an individual health insurance policy.

“Our nation owes these families a special debt,” said Senator Kennedy. “As they continue on the road to recovery and deal with the emotional and financial impact of that day, they should be able to purchase stable, worry-free and affordable health insurance.”

“The families who lost their loved ones on September 11th continue to face the hardship and trauma of that devastating day with courage and determination,” said Representative Markey. “We should do whatever we can to ease the pain of these brave Americans, and I am proud to be introducing legislation today with Senator Kennedy to provide these families with continued access to low-cost, quality health care.”

The Continuing Care for Recovering Families Act will enable spouses and children of victims of September 11th to buy coverage under the federal program indefinitely. Families would have to enroll within 120 days after the Act passes or within 120 days of losing their current coverage.

Senator Kennedy and Congressman Markey became aware of the issue in discussions with families of the September 11th victims and leaders of the Massachusetts 9/11 Fund, which coordinates assistance for Massachusetts families affected by September 11th.

Faith Arter, President of the Massachusetts 9/11 Fund, emphasized the need for early passage of the legislation. “Many Massachusetts 9/11 families are coming to the end of their current low-cost group insurance and are now facing individual premium payments of up to \$1200 per month,” Faith said. “They are telling us that in addition to high premium payments, they are now forced to pay high out-of-pocket

expenses for their mental health visits, as mental health benefits are often limited under the individual plans.”

With more and more families affected every day, Senator Kennedy and Congressman Markey called for prompt passage of the Act.

Rep. Markey said, “As family members of 9/11 victims lose their health insurance, we must act quickly to ensure that they are not left without the security and piece of mind that medical insurance provides. This bill allows us to express our thanks for the heroism that these families demonstrated in the face of tragedy.”

“These families deserve this helping hand,” said Senator Kennedy. “They shouldn’t have to join the ranks of the uninsured.”